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PSYX 270.50: Fundamental Psychology of Learning

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PSYX 270 Online – Fundamentals of the Psychology of Learning

Fall Semester 2017

Instructor Information

Instructor: Bethany Gorter

Office: Skaggs 235

Office hours: By appointment

Email: bethany.gorter@umontana.edu

Required Text

Introduction to Learning & Behavior (4th Ed) Powell, Honey, & Symbalux

Course Objectives

There are three primary goals of this course: 1) familiarize students with current knowledge and theory regarding learning processes, both elementary and complex, 2) expose students to the types of research methods used in investigating learning phenomena, and 3) gain a broader understanding of how learning processes impact everyday aspects of our lives.

The major topics to be covered include habituation, sensitization, Pavlovian conditioning, instrumental & operant learning, vicarious learning, stimulus control, schedules of reinforcement, limits of learning, and basic animal cognition.

The course emphasizes current theoretical and experimental investigations of learning processes as well as some exposure to current theories in animal cognition. While much of the research presented is based on non-human animals, this is not to suggest the application of these processes will not extend to humans. In fact, many of the basic learning processes extend throughout the animal kingdom, with differences being due to the interaction of the animal's evolutionary history, nervous system architecture, and ecology.

Course Assignments & Grading Criteria

Assignments for this class include quizzes, labs, and discussions.

Quizzes

The week 1 quiz is comprised of 5 multiple-choice (1 point each) and 5 essay questions (5 points each) and is worth 30 points total. For the remainder of the weeks, the weekly quiz is comprised of a mixture of 30 multiple choice and true or false items (1 point each) and is worth a total of 30 points. This assignment tests your knowledge of the reading material for the current week. The quizzes are adaptive, meaning that if you get the wrong answer on your first attempt you will be given additional attempts to select the correct answer. There are no tests in this course, so these quizzes are designed to assess whether you are reading the assigned materials.

Labs

These assignments are supplements to the required readings, quizzes, and discussions in class. They are described in full detail under “Lab” for each week and are available for review before the week that they are due. There are four “Lab” assignments across the semester, and they are worth 40 points each. Labs are due by 11:55pm on the Friday of the week specified.

Example of a Lab assignment: **Using the attached excel file describe how the Rescorla-Wagner model predicts trial by trial learning.**

Discussions

Doing well on the Discussion Board assignment requires consistent and detailed participation each week and is the participation and essay portion of the course. Grades are based on (1) attendance and (2) quality of your posts and do not include any posts made in the “Q & A” or “Welcome” Discussions. Full credit requires high quality and maximum frequency posts. The two charts below explain how your discussion posts are graded.

Attendance Grading		30 points possible
Students must post (respond) a minimum of three separate days per week. You can post more than three days, and post more than three times, but, at a minimum, you must post on three separate days.	3 days	30 points
	2 days	25 points
	1 day	20 points
	0 days	0 points

Once the number of days is calculated, students are then graded based on their contributions to the discussion. The following points are deducted, not added, from the points earned above, to yield a final weekly “attendance” score. (Students cannot earn negative points. The lowest possible score is zero.)

Students must make a post to the discussion question (DQ) in the weekly discussion forum. Each weekly DQ post will be due by Friday	Each day late	2 points lost
Students must post (respond) to a minimum of three of their peers . You can post to more than three, but, at a minimum, you must reply to three of your peers. This promotes student engagement with each other, rather than just responding to the DQ posted by the instructor.	3 peers	0 points lost
	2 peers	5 points lost
	1 peer	10 points lost
	0 peers	15 points lost

Once I have calculated your final weekly “attendance” score, then I grade the quality of your posts, as explained below. Again, the following points are deducted, not added, from the final weekly “attendance” score, to yield a final weekly “Discussion” score. (Students cannot earn negative points. The lowest score is a zero.)

Quality Grading		
Students must make detailed and thoughtful posts that reflect an appropriate application of emerging knowledge and vocabulary in the topic area. Each post must add value to the discussion and be related to the required readings for the week. Below are additional details of how I grade the quality of your posts.	Superior	0 points lost
	Above Average	5 points lost
	Average	10 points lost
	Below Average	15 points lost
	Unacceptable	20 points lost

Superior

Your contributions demonstrate a complete mastery of the materials assigned. Your responses might integrate multiple views and/or show strong analysis and reflection on topics and other student’s posts. You provide evidence that you are reading the assigned materials and other student postings and are responding accordingly, bringing out interesting interpretations. You know the facts and are able to analyze them, apply them to real life scenarios and handle conceptual ideas. It is highly unlikely that you could get full credit in less than two paragraphs.

Above Average

Your responses build on the ideas of other participants and dig deeper into assignment questions or issues. When you make intelligent posts during the week, including some good critique of the material, then you have demonstrated you have an understanding of the material, are reading posts of your colleagues, and are contributing to the class. Your posts demonstrate confidence with the materials, but may be just a bit off target in one area or another.

Average

You have meaningful interaction with other participants’ postings. Posts that state, “I agree” or “I disagree” and include a detailed explanation of what is disagreed or agreed upon and why, or introduce a perspective or concept that adds to the discussion. However, you may have rambling, lengthy posts with no clear point, your writing has a lack of clarity and comprehension, or there are considerable typos and grammatical errors.

Below Average

You answer questions asked by me or other students but do not expand upon your response or you answer questions based only on your opinion, rather than on research or proper evidence.

Your posts are unusually short (one paragraph or less) and you fail to demonstrate a clear working knowledge of the material covered for the week.

Unacceptable

You will receive little credit in the week's discussion by just showing up and making trivial comments, without adding any new thought to the discussion. At the low end of the spectrum, no participation gets a "0." If you are not in the discussion, you do not earn any points.

Comments such as "I agree" or other one-sentence responses will result in zero points. Copying and pasting from a website without providing your own substantial insight is also an unacceptable post – even if you have properly cited your sources. This assignment is an assessment of your understanding of the information covered in this class. Copying and pasting from websites does not demonstrate a working knowledge of the material.

Special Note: I check very carefully for plagiarism in the discussion posts. If you have plagiarized, you will get a zero for the entire semester. If you plagiarize a second time, you will fail the course. If you engage in flaming behavior posts, you will get a zero for the entire assignment.

Course Grading

Your final grade for the course will consist of scores on weekly quizzes, discussion posts, and lab exercises. Your final grade is the percentage of the total points earned divided by total possible points. There is no course curve in this class.

The following chart breaks down the points for each assignment type.

Assignment type	Points
Quizzes (14 each, at 30 points each)	420 points possible
Discussion Posts (14 each, at 30 points each)	420 points possible
Lab Exercises (4 each, at 40 points each)	160 points possible
Total Points	1000 points possible

The following chart shows the grade scale for the final course grade.

Final Course Grade	Number of points	Percentage
A	895 - 1000	89.5% - 100%
B	795 - 894	79.5% - 89%

Final Course Grade	Number of points	Percentage
C	695 - 794	69.5% - 79%
D	595 - 694	59.5% - 69%
F	0 – 594	< 59.5%

Course Policies and Guidelines

Announcements

Students are responsible for all announcements made in class. These may include changes in policy, due dates, or assignments requirements. Announcements are posted in the announcements section of the course or are directly emailed to the students.

Technology Policies

Please contact UM Online if you experience technical difficulties. Though I would love to be able to help, I am not qualified to do so. ***Critical note: I do not allow technical issues for not having the proper software as reasons for late or incomplete work.*** To ensure your protection, please keep technical support contact information available offline and please do not wait until the last minute to complete your work each week! To access technical support (and save their contact information offline) please click on the “Tech Support” link to the left of the page.

Technical Alternatives

Also, keep in mind your technical alternative if you have computer difficulties. If you live near the University, campus computers are an option. Otherwise, consider the public library, an internet café, a computer at work, or a friend or family member’s computer. Have a plan of action in mind so that you can complete the required work each week if an issue arises.

Assignment Due Dates, Late Work, and Make-up Work

Assignments are due every week on Friday by 11:59pm MST. Please be sure to start your assignments early enough to complete them by the time the week closes.

As a rule, I do not accept late work or allow make-up work, except for one “freebie.” No reason is required to take advantage of this opportunity, and it is the student’s responsibility to contact the instructor to make this happen. Students have 24 hours to make up the work from the time I send the make-up assignment email, and students are not permitted to use the “freebie” at any time during finals week. Aside from this one freebie, no extra points will be given and no extra credit will be assigned.

Students **cannot**, under any circumstance, make up the discussion posts assignment. Due to the interactive nature of this assignment, students must be engaged in this process throughout the week each week in order to receive credit.

To make up multiple missed assignments it is mandatory that you 1) notify your instructor before the time of the assignment and 2) provide proper documentation verifying the reason for your absence. Examples of proper documentation include a medical note or a death or family emergency. Remember, prior notification and documentation is mandatory! You can provide documentation by 1) scanning and emailing documents, 2) mailing the documents, or 3) bringing them by my office during office hours. I do not allow students to make up work until I have received the proper documents. I do not allow make up work during the week of final exams.

Grades of Incomplete

Departmental and university policies regarding incompletes do not allow changing “incomplete” grades after one year has passed since the “I” was granted.

Academic Misconduct

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the [Student Conduct Code](#).

Plagiarism

The Student Conduct Code discusses plagiarism. However, it is a serious offense worth re-mentioning. This course requires students to adhere to APA format when citing, paraphrasing, or referencing sources. If you have plagiarized, either intentionally or accidentally, you will receive a zero on the entire assignment. If you plagiarize a second time, you will fail the course.

Netiquette

Students must engage in proper “netiquette.” Netiquette or “network etiquette” is a professional and mannerly way of communicating with others in the online medium. Failure to engage in proper netiquette will result in earning a zero for each assignment where an incident has occurred.

Disability Modifications

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and [Disability Services for Students](#). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with Disability Services, please contact Disability Services in Lommasson Center 154 or call 406-243-2243. I will work with you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification.

Dropping/Adding/Changing grade option

Please refer to the [Registrar’s Office webpage](#) for information and policies.

Tentative Course Schedule

Units	Readings	Quizzes & Discussions	Lab Assignments
Week 1 (8/27-8/31)	Netiquette Guidelines Questionnaire-Online Learning	Week 1 Discussion Week 1 Quiz	

Units	Readings	Quizzes & Discussions	Lab Assignments
Welcome/How to be an Online Student		Post to Welcome Forum	
Week 2 (9/3 - 9/7) Introduction to Animal Learning and Behavior	Intro to Learning and Behavior: Chapter 1 Evolution primer Lab assignment #1	Week 2 Discussion Week 2 Quiz	
Week 3 (9/10 - 9/14) Research Methods and Ethics	Intro to Learning and Behavior: Chapter 2	Week 3 Discussion Week 3 Quiz	Lab assignment #1 due
Week 4 (9/17 – 9/21) Elicited Behaviors and Classical Conditioning	Intro to Learning and Behavior: Chapter 3	Week 4 Discussion Week 4 Quiz	
Week 5 (9/24– 9/28) Classical Conditioning: Underlying Processes and Practical Applications	Intro to Learning and Behavior: Chapter 4 Lab assignment #2	Week 5 Discussion Week 5 Quiz	
Week 6 (10/1 – 10/05) Classical Conditioning: Underlying Processes and Practical Applications	Intro to Learning and Behavior: Chapter 5	Week 6 Discussion Week 6 Quiz	Lab assignment #2 due
Week 7 (10/08 - 10/12)	Intro to Learning and Behavior;	Week 7 Discussion	

Units	Readings	Quizzes & Discussions	Lab Assignments
Operant Conditioning: Introduction	Chapter 6 Materials related to lab #3	Week 7 Quiz	
Week 8 (10/15 – 10/19) Schedules and Theories of Reinforcement	Intro to Learning and Behavior:, Chapter 7	Week 8 Discussion Week 8 Quiz	Lab #3 due
Week 9 (10/22 – 10/26) Extinction & Stimulus Control	Intro to Learning and Behavior:, Chapter 8	Week 9 Discussion Week 9 Quiz	
Week 10 (10/29-11/02) Escape, Avoidance & Punishment	Intro to Learning and Behavior:, Chapter 9 Read materials related to lab #4	Week 10 Discussion Week 10 Quiz	
Week 11 (11/05-11/09) Choice, Matching & Self-Control	Intro to Learning and Behavior: Chapter 10	Week 11 Discussion Week 11 Quiz	Lab # 4 due
Week 12 (11/12-11/16) Observational Learning and Rule-Governed Behavior	Intro to Learning and Behavior: Chapter 11	Week 12 Discussion Week 12 Quiz	
Week 13 (11/19-11/23)	BREAK!!		

Units	Readings	Quizzes & Discussions	Lab Assignments
Thanksgiving			
Week 14 (11/26-11/30) Biological Dispositions in Learning	Intro to Learning and Behavior: Chapter 12	Week 14 Discussion Week 14 Quiz	
Week 15 (12/03-12/07) Comparative Cognition	Chapter 13	Week 15 Discussion Week 15 Quiz	